

Faith and Social Work: A Pathway to Holistic Community Support

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Abstract:

This research examines the impact of faith on social work practices in New Zealand, focusing on how Christian principles guide empathy, compassion, and holistic support in community service delivery. By analysing faith-based approaches, this study highlights their effectiveness in addressing physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, advocating for the integration of spiritual frameworks into social work practice.

Introduction:

Social work in New Zealand is grounded in principles of social justice, empowerment, and holistic care. This thesis investigates the role of faith, particularly Christian values, in enhancing these principles within social work practices. It posits that a faith-based approach offers a more comprehensive response to individuals' needs by addressing not only their physical and emotional challenges but also their spiritual well-being.

Literature Review:

Previous studies suggest that faith can act as a powerful motivator for social workers, guiding their ethical and compassionate service delivery (Brown, 2020). Research indicates that faith-based organisations often have a more profound impact on client outcomes due to their emphasis on hope and unconditional support (Williams, 2021). This review explores these themes within the context of New Zealand's social work sector.

Methodology:

The research was conducted using qualitative methods, including interviews with 40 social workers from both faith-based and secular organisations. Additionally, case studies of five faith-based social service agencies were analysed to understand how they integrate Christian principles into their practices.

Results:

The study found that social workers in faith-based organisations reported higher levels of job satisfaction and a stronger sense of purpose in their roles. Clients receiving services from these organisations experienced a deeper sense of community and support, often describing their interactions as transformative and life-changing.

Discussion:

These findings suggest that faith plays a crucial role in guiding social work practices toward more compassionate and client-centred approaches. While secular social work also achieves positive outcomes, the incorporation of Christian values provides an added layer of spiritual support that many clients find invaluable.

Conclusion:

Faith-based social work offers a unique blend of empathy, practical support, and spiritual guidance that can lead to more effective and meaningful interventions. This thesis recommends further exploration into how faith can be more systematically incorporated into social work training and practice to enhance service delivery across diverse communities.

